

# SAVE COLONG bulletin

## THE COLONG COMMITTEE • A National Wilderness Society

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LOGGING RAINFOREST TREES IS STATE - SPONSORED VANDALISM.\*

DO THE RIGHT THING: STOP IT NOW!

\*A VANDAL IS A "WILFUL OR IGNORANT DESTROYER OF ANYTHING BEAUTIFUL, VENERABLE OR WORTHY OF PRESERVATION"(OXFORD DICTIONARY)

### RAINFOREST ENQUIRY BY DEMOCRATS.

The Australian Democrats moved in the Senate on 29th May 1981 for a full government enquiry into the logging of rainforests in Australia.

Senator Colin Mason (NSW), Deputy Leader of the Australian Democrats gave Notice of Motion as the initiating step of a major national campaign to prevent further logging of rainforests.

The Democrats move is supported by the Australian Conservation Foundation which has raised over \$50,000 to run a national "Rescue the Rainforest Campaign".

*"There is little doubt that if we allow logging to proceed for another ten years, as the sawmillers propose, this asset would be destroyed forever,"* Senator Mason said.

*"At the same time we would not wish to see unemployment as a result and we are looking towards solutions to that,"* Senator Mason said.

Senator Mason's proposal calls for the Commonwealth to assist the States to protect the fragile chain of rainforest remnants along the East Coast.

It also would create the establishment by the Commonwealth Government of an Australian Rainforest Fund.

Senator Mason gave notice that he would move his motion on the first sitting

day of the Budget Session in August. The Colong Committee is writing to all Federal Parliamentarians urging them to support the motion.

### THE POLITICS OF CONSERVATION.

Below we reproduce the substance of an address given by Committee member Milo Dunphy to the City Branch of the Liberal Party. The Colong Committee, under Milo's leadership during its early days, was among the first Australian conservation bodies to appreciate that the preservation of natural areas is an aspect of government land use planning and therefore depends on political action. We have tried to persuade parliamentarians of all parties to support our goals. This is the proper way for a public interest group to operate in a democratic society, and it is to the credit of our parliamentarians that, despite the opposition of powerful public authorities and wealthy development organisations, our voice has been heard, and, when we have built up a wide measure of support, our aims have often been achieved.

Milo's address covers the whole spectrum of conservation, of which our wilderness campaigns are an essential part. Since our successes to date have been achieved not only as a result of our own efforts, but with the support of the entire

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conservation movement, it is important that we should look at the wider picture.

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The Wran Government came to power in NSW largely because of the attention it paid to a wide range of community groups and interests. I am here tonight representing one of the interests which Labor wooed successfully - the conservation or environment movement.

Several years before Mr. Wran took office there was an Environmental Sub Committee of State Council of the Liberal Party to which we fed material. Then we became aware that Labor had an environment committee too with Keith O'Connell as chairman and a young law student, John Whitehouse, as secretary. We found it increasingly difficult to relate to the Liberal Committee because of issues such as Boyd Plateau, which was being logged by the Cotton's Family logging company preparatory to being clearfelled for pine. But Labor in opposition began to debate and agree with whole slabs of very worthwhile environment policy.

The Colong Committee represented about 200 community organisations on the Colong limestone mining issue and about 120 on the Boyd Plateau issue. Yet we were never able to see the Premier Askin or Premier Lewis on these issues. But we found Labor parliamentarians very willing to support our cases - particularly when they found we could provide the best documentation in the business on technical subjects such as the quantity of limestone to be found in various Blue Mountains deposits, the flora of the Boyd Plateau, and whether or not a dam was proposed on the Kowmung River. Labor was only too delighted to present petitions against the Colong mining lease signed by 120 Macquarie Street doctors led by Sir Kempson Maddox or 180 Roman Catholic priests led by the local bishop.

The good understanding established in those debates was carried forward into disputes with the beachminers and into other forestry, pollution, development and environment matters. In contrast with Mr. Askin's or Mr. Lewis' rejection of attempts to send deputations to them we found Mr. Wran willing for instance, to talk to seminars of conservationists on the subject of

woodchipping on the North Coast. And he showed a grasp of our concerns and a willingness to commit himself on the vital subject of control of woodchipping in privately owned forest lands.

#### LABOR IN GOVERNMENT.

When Labor came to govern in 1976 we were delighted to find that Mr. Wran was if anything even more accessible. He addressed annual conferences of conservationists. For the first time in the history of NSW we had a NSW Premier spending a weekend in the bush with conservationists to discuss a new national park - and at the end of the visit to promise to dedicate 95,000 hectares of new parkland. On a second weekend visit to the Colo region he promised 450,000 hectares. Both promises were made good within a year.

Not only Mr. Wran was accessible - most Labor Ministers were available to representatives of community groups. We struck difficulties with a few such as Mr. Crabtree. Yet we found that our protests about mismanagement of national park matters were listened to and soon we had a more understanding and dynamic Minister in charge of national parks in Mr. Landa. With Mr. Landa, as his personal assistant, came John Whitehouse, secretary of Labor's Environment Committee with a network of relationships built up over years among the conservation groups and a broad and detailed understanding of the whole range of issues. Landa and Whitehouse laid the groundwork for:

- \* Labor's decision to issue no more beachmining approvals in national parks and dedication of North Coast National parks.
- \* Dedication of the Southern Blue Mountains, Deua - Wadbilliga and Wollemi National Parks.
- \* New environment and planning legislation.
- \* Lead free petrol decision and lower emissions level.

#### CONSERVATION FAILURES.

The conservation movement did not get all its own way of course. We failed to get Labor to honour its

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platform promise for a Royal Commission into the enlarged limestone mining leases at South Marulan.

We failed to achieve returnable container legislation.

We lost the Border Ranges Rainforest inquiry although anyone taking part in it would have said we should have won it hands down.

And we failed to get Labor to clamp down on the environmentally and socially disastrous Botany Bay project although Labor did refuse the coal loader project - winning a seat (for Mr. Ryan) in so doing.

But in the last 12 months Government resistance to the conservation movements proposals has stiffened noticeably.

Once again the community environment movement (and I believe the public interest) badly needs an informed and effective Parliamentary Opposition and it is to this purpose that I want to speak chiefly tonight.

#### THE CONSERVATION/ENVIRONMENT MOVEMENT.

Lets look briefly at the environment movement.

The largest organisation is the National Trust with 100,000 members nationally, including 30,000 in NSW. Its membership over the last 12 months increased 20%.

The other large national conservation organisation, The Australian Conservation Foundation, has also increased its membership 20% to 10,000 over the last 12 months under those excellent presidents Dr. Coombs and Mr. Murray Wilcox QC.

Back in NSW the National Parks Association of NSW has nearly 5,000 members with increases of between 20% and 10% in each of the last 3 years.

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW incorporates 65 Societies adding new groups each year.

Nationally there are about 2,000 conservation organisations. I estimate that the total paid up membership of conservation organisations in Australia now exceeds 250,000 with over 100,000 in NSW. That would be about 2 to 3 times the combined membership of the Liberal and Labor parties.

The conservation/environment groups represent a wide spectrum of interests ranging from the traditional 'greeny' interests of wildlife, trees and national parks to the urban issues of clean air, water pollution, waste recycling, public transport, and new areas of interest such as low impact technology toxic substances, and an issue I would not dare to mention in Country Party ears: "Animal Liberation" described by Mr. Court as the biggest threat yet posed on the interests of primary producers.

Typical examples of these groups would be:

- \* 'Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society' - ( a basically green issue group in my suburb)
- \* Hunters Hill Trust
- \* Bega - Tathra Conservation Society
- \* Springwood Bushwalkers
- \* The Loftus Anti-Tip Committee
- \* Macleay Valley Canoe Club
- \* Manly - Warringah Fauna and Flora Protection Society
- \* Northern Beaches & Bushland Committee and so on.

There is a tendency for some of these societies to become moribund with an ageing membership - so that once extremely active societies like the Wildlife Preservation Society in NSW bears little resemblance to the society under David Stead, when it campaigned so strongly to end the trade in Koala and Platypus skins.

#### ANTI- CONSERVATION GROUPS.

Occasionally such a society is taken over by anti-conservation interests as a sort of exploiters' front in the conservation movement - an example being the once respectable 'Men of the Land' now the so-called 'Conservation Society of NSW' with the former public relations officer of Associated Country Sawmillers as its Secretary. This organisation attempts to contradict every statement of the combined conservation societies on forestry matters and has therefore been expelled from the Nature Conservation Council of NSW.

However for every Society that fails half a dozen more appear.

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Mention should also be made of those groups which tend to form a cutting edge to the conservation movement. Prominent among such groups is FOE (Friends of the Earth) consisting of highly dedicated younger people, many of them graduates, exhibiting a concern for Australia which is one of the most positive elements of our society. FOE has specialised in campaigns on whales, uranium, packaging and currently the international trade in Endangered Species.

Another group at the cutting edge of the conservation movement is, I hope, Total Environment Centre of which I am Director. We have no members as such. We are run by a Management Committee of 16 which acts rather like a company board except we are non-profitmaking. There are six part time staff and over 300 volunteers, most of them graduates. They represent a tremendous resource of skill so that we are able to boast greater technical expertise than some government departments.

TEC exists chiefly by donations from the public but also on the profits from our bookshop, some consultancies, lecturing and so forth. We have a small annual grant from the NSW Government but no grant for administration from the Federal Government.

It is obvious that the conservation movement cannot deploy public relations expenditures like the major industries. We cannot spend \$1 1/4 million like the mining companies did on a massive program to upgrade their acceptance by the public. We do not have \$200,000 to spend on a single campaign which is believed to be the figure spent over the Christmas period by Associated Country Sawmillers of NSW in their "Let the Light shine through" performance. But the public is providing funds to the conservation movement as never before. Over the last 2 months a single letter of appeal for funds to help save rainforests has brought \$50,000 to ACF. Over the same period the WA public has provided \$40,000 for the court case in the US against the two American parent companies of Alcoa.

#### POLITICIANS UNDERVALUE COMMUNITY CONCERN.

Community concern for conservation issues is, in my opinion, consistently undervalued by Australian politicians,

but I doubt that they can continue to do so for much longer.

Professor Milbrath has given me the result from 15 US public opinion surveys on the environment. In each case something like 80% of the respondents in a large sample said they were willing to pay more for petrol if they could have an improvement in the air quality of their city - or they would pay higher rates if water quality could be improved.

There was a second part to most of the 15 polls. The same questions were asked of US administrators but the question was phrased to seek the administrators estimate of what percentage of the public would agree to pay more for petrol in return for better air and so on. Consistently the administrators estimated only 30% of the public would do so. But 80% of the people said they would. In my view this same cynicism and underestimation of public opinion exists in Australia. Recent studies in Australia by Boniecki, about to be published, support my view.

There are two major factors in frustrating the proper expression of public support for conservation in Australia:

One is the failure of the conservation movement to date to organise itself for elections.

The other is the growing skill of governments and bureaucracies in adopting token stances on conservation issues, imitation inquiries, environmental impact studies (which are triumphs of obscurity and omission) and above all the development of secrecy and bureaucratic obstruction.

The conservation movement has made several small attempts in the electoral field. We have a little expertise in canvassing and publishing candidates opinions on conservation issues. We have a lot more experience in assisting parties to prepare electoral platforms (TEC has for instance written drafts for four parties). We have been even more experience in assisting

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worthwhile candidates of various parties at elections who showed a personal commitment to conservation or particular conservation policies.

In a very few cases conservationists have stood for elections. At one election, soured by anti-conservation policies of the Coalition government, three Colong Committee members stood for the Australia Party. The best result was by Brian Walker in Mr. Askins electorate, taking over 30% of the vote. Subsequently, I believe, Mr. Askin said that a local conservationist in good standing could take that electorate on his own retirement. At a Federal election, standing for the Australia Party again, 75% of my preferences went to Labor giving Thorburn the seat and increasing the Whitlam Government majority by 2.

Something politicians of both sides find hard to accept is that many conservationists are first and foremost conservationists and only secondly political. Only Political action will save some of the best parts of Australia or prevent its water and air from becoming poisonous, or to prevent the loss of irreplaceable species or populations of wildlife.

From my standpoint it doesn't make much difference whether a Liberal/Country Party Government builds a Botany Bay Port to maximise the profits of a few oil and shipping companies or whether a Labor Government continues with the project because a few Right Wing unions have concluded deals with the same companies. The result as far I am concerned is the same - a vast imposition of traffic and increased air pollution on the southern half of Sydney's population, together with the utter destruction of the natural systems of Botany Bay. This was not a democratically conceived and debated development but one forced upon the people by an insular authority, the Maritime Services Board, which employed not a single planner, sociologist or biologist.

Nor does it make much practical difference whether a Parliamentary Party is theoretically bound by party decisions (as is Labor) or not bound by Party decisions (as the Liberal Government is not). The practical results of these two diametrically

opposed standpoints tend to be the same.

- \* Mr. Pat Hills as Minister for Mines refused to institute the Royal Commission into the Bungonia Mining leases which was the agreed Party position and Mr. Wran subsequently opened the new buildings associated with the enlarged leases over public parklands.
- \* Similarly the Liberal/Country Party Government ignored recommendations by the Liberal State Council on Boyd Plateau.
- \* Personally I am just as revolted by Labor decision to expand the Eden chipmilling operation without a public inquiry as I was by the decision of the Liberal/Country Party Minister of the day Jack Beale to authorise its commencement.
- \* I find Labors decision to manage Lord Howe Island through a Board with a majority of local cardholders just as wrong in principle as extremist proposals by the Country Party to abolish the National Parks, and Wildlife Service and administer National parks through trusts composed of local graziers and foresters.

So I'm afraid that conservationists like me take a simple pragmatic view of the parties - (which is most responsive to our programmes?) - a view not unknown among industrialists, primary producers or unions.

Our pragmatism is surpassed by our realisation of what has been lost already and the little time left to save what is to be saved.

Australia has lost

- \* 73 of its forest
- \* over 3/4 of its rainforest
- \* 1/2 of its topsoil
- \* dozens of wildlife species
- \* all NSW rivers are polluted
- \* Sydney has a very high air pollution problem

So the conservation movement is looking for political friends.



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About half its membership are basically Liberal voters repeatedly disappointed by Liberal policies in the environment area. How long can you retain them without taking up their cause? How can you win government in NSW without winning over a majority in the large special interest groups of which the conservation movement is one of the major?

The obvious problem for the Liberal Party is its tie with the Country Party. No party has been more aggressive towards the environment and the environment movement than the Country Party. No party has so uncritically supported beachminers, uranium miners, woodchippers and rainforest destruction as the Country Party. I can't prove it but I believe the Liberal Party's embarrassment on environment policy is losing its standing in the metropolitan electorates which is basically where Government has to be won.

The Labor Party faces the same problem in its internal struggle between Left and Right. In order to gain government the Right was willing to allow the Left to court the environmentalists but the Right is now clamping down. The Right regards environment issues as too dangerous to debate in Labor's Annual Conference, because the Centre Right tends to vote with the Left on matters like beachmining, woodchip, national parks and endangered species. Don Day, if you like, is to Labor as Leon Punch is to the Liberal Party.

If Labor's Left wins a few more Cabinet seats then you may expect Labor policies on the environment to substantially improve.

But until the Cabinet balance changes, the growing dissatisfaction of the environment movement with some of Labor's current environmental policies offers an electoral opportunity for the Liberal Party. It's hard to understand how Ministers with the qualities of Crabtree or Gordon survive unchallenged by the opposition. The conservation movement has defeated both of them on important issues and we haven't a single seat in Parliament!

The current dissatisfaction with Labor's environmental policies also offers a chance to the Democrats. Senator Mason has already announced that the

Democrats will run on rainforest preservation at the State election despite Mr. Wran's evident hope to bury it as an issue. The public is so sensitised to rainforest now that it seems already to be worth tens of thousands of metropolitan votes.

Senator Mason told the press that the Democrats will move in Canberra for a Commonwealth/States Rainforest Agreement Act like the Commonwealth/States Softwood Agreement Act. Under the Rainforest Act funds would be available to the States for saving rainforest in a variety of ways. It is positive proposals like that, well publicised, which I believe will win conservationists' votes.

These are several ways to go about challenging Labor on current issues:

1. Reconstitute the Liberal Party's State Council Environment Sub Committee and call for draft policies on a range of issues.
2. Establish briefing sessions for Parliamentarians on half a dozen major issues and build up a barrage of Parliamentary questions, debate and publicity.
3. Publish well thought out policies and circulate to the relevant community environment organisations seeking comment and endorsement.
4. Seek a series of meetings with community groups to debate the policies.

The conservation movement has had friends among Liberal politicians. Locally we have had good relationships with

- \* Max Ruddock.
- \* Milton Morris.
- \* Kevin Rozzoli.
- \* John Holt.

But we need more Liberal Politicians to argue the environment movements case! I believe the Liberal Party has a lot to gain from such collaboration too.

SIERRA CLUB FIGHTS POLITICAL APPOINTMENT. (overleaf)

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The Sierra Club occupies a leading place in the U.S. Conservation movement. The Australian conservation movement owes much to the example of this organisation, and for this reason the Colong Committee subscribes to its publications.

In our January issue we quoted the Sierra Club's report of the appointment by President Reagan of James G. Watt as his Interior Secretary. Mr. Watt's legal firm has specialised in representing interests which seek to develop public lands for oil exploration and production, mining, grazing, power generation, irrigation, urban development and other purposes. It has fought against wilderness designations.

The Club has therefore organised a "Replace Watt Petition Drive". Doug Scott, Sierra Club Director of Federal Affairs reports that *"The tide of signed petitions rolling into the San Francisco headquarters far surpasses the expectations we had when we launched the drive"*. Many petitions are now in circulation and the total of signatures now received and counted has passed 200,000.

It is also reported that when Maxim Shostokovitch conducted the National Orchestra's Memorial Day concert on the lawn of the U.S. Capitol in Washington before a crowd of 60,000 the M.C. mentioned Watt in his speech of thanks for the concert and the crowd "broke into loud and long booing". Australian politicians please note.

#### THE LAND GRABBERS.

In a short brochure titled as above, the Sierra Club lists the commodity interests seeking to exploit public lands without regard for multiple use values, responsible long-term management, or the public. These interests are mining, fossil fuel, grazing, timber and off-road vehicle users, as in Australia. Off-road vehicles have caused extensive reduction of wildlife, native plant species and archeological relics, as well as major soil loss and terrain destruction.

#### IS THE FORESTRY COMMISSION REALLY NECESSARY?

In the "Financial Review" of 14th July it was reported that the Retirement Fund of the Bank of New South Wales had "quietly invested \$1 million in a 2,003 acre tract of pine forest outside Oberon". Furthermore it anticipated its investment would net a return of 15 per cent

over 25 years. The investment was made on the advice of Mr. K.F. Shiels, formerly economic and investment adviser of the Commonwealth Trading and Savings Banks, who carried out a detailed feasibility for the "Wales". "An investment of \$44,000 in 100 acres of forest" he said "is likely to earn at least \$1.8 million in timber sales within 25 years."

The trees will be planted and maintained by a private company, Timberland Pty. Ltd. Inquiry from this company revealed that it buys the land for its plantings at market rates, and that most of the land in the Oberon plantation was previously cleared. Mr. Martin Fitzgerald, of Timberland, believes that investment in timber plantations is an excellent inflation hedge and particularly suitable for long term investors, such as superannuation funds. It is a form of investment which has been particularly favoured by U.S. and European pension funds for some time. Timberland today manages more than 22,500 acres of forest and expects to plant 10,000 more acres within 12 months. Timber is being grown profitably without recourse to the public purse, and within the limitations of Catchment Areas Protection Act and regulations.

The finances of the Forestry Commission make a sorry comparison. What is the value of the 3.2 million hectares of public land, mostly cost-free and forested, which the Commission controls? How much has been spent on forest improvement? What would the interest bill be if the Commission had paid the market price for its land, serviced its loans at current interest rates and borrowed at prevailing interest rates to cover its deficits, now aggregating nearly \$200 million? (This is purely theoretical; no private firm losing that amount could borrow. It would have been made bankrupt long ago). Hundreds of millions of dollars have been sunk in capital expenditure which has come out of

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revenue and loan funds. (We don't know how much because there are no commercial accounts). Debt charges in 1978/9 were only \$6 million. The total interest bill on land at market value, plus other capital outlay, plus losses, may well be nearer \$100 million, sufficient to pay a large subsidy on every dwelling built in the State or to employ many people. The claim that these losses are an investment for the future cuts no ice. For the Commission the future has already arrived. It is now 65 years old - an adequate time to achieve self sufficiency - but losses continue to mount.

What has this expenditure achieved? When the Forestry Bill was introduced in August 1916 the Hon. G.W. Ashford, Secretary for Lands, described the conflict between land settlement and forestry. "It would have been possible," he said, "under reasonable administration, to avoid the great destruction of our natural resources which has gone on unchecked, and which, with all the expenditure this Bill will permit, we shall never replace." He believed that "by replanting and other regeneration we can perpetuate the forests which we have in existence."

The Act did enable the Commission to "avoid the great destruction of our natural resources", until World War II, by the application of its sustained yield policy considerable inroads were then made into the forest estate. The pressures of post-war demand, particularly for housing were responsible for further inroads. Then came clear felling for pine plantations, wood-chipping, the "selective logging" of our last stands of rainforest and the logging of mountain sides. The abandonment of "sustained yield" forestry is evident in the Commission's publication on Indigenous Native Forests (1976) in which "logging to the limits of economic exploitation" was acknowledged. Since this is exactly the result which would have been achieved without the Commission, one is tempted to conclude the Commission is now simply a drain on the public purse. Or, worse still, that, by providing roading and other services at public expense it is subsidising the destruction of much of the forest estate.

There is a simple way out of this dilemma and that is to charge royalties that cover the cost of services provided. Economically scaled royalty rates would of course raise timber prices. This would have the effect of reducing demand,

but encouraging supply by private enterprise. The reduction in Commission losses would be sufficient to enable large subsidies to be made on dwelling costs. Lower demand, and stimulation of supply, would eventually lead to plentiful and cheaper timber. There is a close parallel between such a policy and that adopted by the Australian Government on petrol pricing.

Could we do without the Commission? The answer is definitely "no". It is essential that our forests be managed to yield in perpetuity. It is also essential, to provide for future needs that they should be extended. It is probable that much of this work could be efficiently done by private enterprise, but there are also enormous areas - over 50% of our land - which require remedial soil erosion measures. Much of this work would be unprofitable, at least in the short run, and here the Commission has a vital role to play, since the best remedial treatment is re-forestation.

So long as the Commission continues, under its charter, so often unctuously recited by Forestry Commissioners, to put "provision of timber" and "encouragement of its use" before conservation, this will not be done. A revision of the charter is long overdue.

ALEX COLLEY.

#### QUEENSLAND TOUR.

Two members of the Colong Committee, Milo Dunphy and Alex Colley, have just returned from a 6 weeks tour in Queensland in the company of three other conservationists.

Queensland is a big place - twice the size of N.S.W. - with less than half the population, most of which is on the coast, as in the other States. The party travelled up through Central Queensland, which is very pleasant touring country in the warm winter sunshine. Much of it is open savannah land which has never been cleared,



covered in the long tawny grass typical of the State, and offering ideal camp sites. No "in depth" studies of the Queensland conservation position were possible in the time, but some clear impressions were gleaned. Perhaps the most vivid is that in the State of "open spaces" one is seldom beyond the sound of machinery.

At Yungaburra on the Atherton Tableland the party camped on the property of Joan Wright, ex A.C.F. Councillor, and her husband. It was found that the local Council was about to cut down the magnificent Bunya pines which grew along the middle of the main street, because of the enormous cones they dropped. These are like outsized pineapples and probably weigh some 10 lbs. There were other ways of overcoming this danger to the citizens, and before the party left Milo had organised the scattered resistance of conservationists and other townpeople into renewed opposition.

At Cairns the party camped in the backyard of Peter Harris, another A.C.F. Councillor. Here too it was found that, though there are a number of well informed and keen conservationists in the district, they work as individuals, rather than as a team. As a result of Milo's activities, which included a lecture at the University College on the resources boom, the organisation of a Cairns Environment Centre was well on the way before they left. Cairns is one of Australia's prime tourist attractions. The tourist industry, with its contribution to the largely ancillary industry of automobile servicing and sales, probably runs sugar a close second as a money earner and is growing fast. It therefore behoves citizens of that city to preserve what the tourists want to see - mainly the natural environment. They have already spoiled one of their prime attractions - the Barron Falls - by damming the river above the falls, while effluent from cane growing has killed much coral. Much of their superbly scenic rainforest areas are being logged.

The party spent nearly two weeks on and near the Windsor Tableland, which is the site of the largest

Australian rainforest remnant. A two lane dirt highway has been bulldozed up to the tableland and the sound of logging and trucking does not cease till well after sundown. Millions of tons of highly erodable red earth have been bulldozed from the hillsides to make this road, and, with a rainfall probably in the 100 inch range, annual maintenance to replace the soil washed down into the streams may well run into some hundreds of thousands of dollars. There was little doubt that the cost of constructing and maintaining this road far exceeds royalty revenue, which means that the destruction of the forest is being highly subsidised. West of the rainforest, bulldozers are busy gouging out stream beds for tin. The area further west, in which is situated Mount Elephant, is magnificent scenic walking country, ideal for a national park.

The party also spent some days north of the Daintree River in the Cape Tribulation area. South of the Cape developers are exploiting the natural beauty of the rainforest lowlands, with their background of dramatic coastal mountains. The road to the Cape has, of course, been greatly improved, against conservation protests. North of the Cape, a park is about to be declared, but it is probable that pressure to extend the road into the last of the coastal wilderness will be exerted. It is now a real tropical paradise, complete with rainforest, coral, and clear mountain streams.

On the way back the enormous open cut mines at Blair Athol, Peak Downs, and Norwich Park were inspected. The coal measures extend for hundreds of kilometres. The method of mining is to start on the shallower measures and follow them down until overburden ratio reaches some 8:1, by which time depth may be up to 100 feet. The enormous \$30 million drag lines, moving some 30 tons of overburden at a time, move forward transferring the overburden from the

cut to the growing ranges of rubble hills behind. Eventually the cuts will be filled, leaving a long range of these hills of loose fill. Restoration of vegetation may be effective, but erosion and drainage problems will be acute before this is accomplished.

The general impression is that in Queensland conservation comes at the bottom of the scale of land use priorities, as it used to, and still does, over much of N.S.W.

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In addition the following have notified us of donations to the A.C.F. during the same period. These donations have enabled the Foundation to make grants to the Colong Committee.

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M. Beard.  
R. Chalmers.  
P. Cook.  
A. Correy.  
E. Cunningham.  
T. Gibbs.  
M. Holmes.  
L. Hutchinson.  
D. Johnson.  
E. Kaub.  
P. Kershaw.  
P. McMahon.  
P. Millard.  
A. Rowe.  
J. Sanders.  
J. Seed.  
E. Ward.  
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The Secretary,  
The Colong Committee Ltd.,  
18 Argyle Street.,  
SYDNEY., N.S.W. 2000.

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I enclose \$5.00 being my subscription for all issues of the Save Colong Bulletin during the calendar year 1981.

I enclose \$. . . . being a donation to the Colong Committee's Fighting Fund.

I have donated \$ . . . . to the Australian Conservation Foundation, expressing a wish that my donation be spent for the purpose of the Colong Committee.

NAME (Mr./Mrs./Miss) .....

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SIGNED \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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